LABOUR MONTHLY

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MAY DAY'S CALL TO ACTION

The Editor

★

DEFEND THE RAILWAYS

Arthur Leith

★

ARAB PROBLEMS

C. Enisah

★

Local Elections: Rates Crisis Examined—Housing the Homeless. New Trade Policies.

MAY 1963

Two Shillings

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LABOUR MONTHLY

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DEAR READERS

The Artificial Poverty of Civilisation

'MAY DAY is above all days the most fitting for protest', wrote William Morris, 'when the promise of the year reproaches the waste inseparable from the society of inequality, the waste which produces our artificial poverty of civilisation.' He wrote that in *Justice* for the last May Day before his death, in 1896. It was never truer than today, when even at their present level the accumulated skill and technique of mankind, put to the service of human needs, could wipe out the very fear of poverty, disease and backwardness everywhere. Instead, the young are robbed of opportunity; the old are pinched and whittled down to fit economical graves; and—the ultimate idiocy—the fruit of each victory by mankind over nature serves only to make men and women 'redundant'. Instead of making even the deserts flourish, they explode H-bombs in them, and make an artificial waste of human lives. And all this under the lunatic shadow of a nuclear war threat to keep the system of private profit safe in dead men's hands. The brighter the returning spring the greater our sense of outrage at such a system of artificial poverty, which teaches as the height of ambition the most 'efficient' steering of social wealth into private pockets.

This May Day, in demonstrations great and small, there will be many marching who never dreamed of doing so before—including teachers, railwaymen, shipyard workers, school-leavers, suddenly awakened to the artificial waste in which they have been living. What is needed to meet this quickening pace of events is to break through the fog of press lies and distortions of reality and bring home 'the facts of life,' as an *Essex teacher* writes. A *Kent* reader says: 'In Britain today, with increasing class struggles, never was there a time more opportune to propagate Marxist ideas. In this *Labour Monthly* deserves the utmost support, particularly from the Labour movement. Best wishes in your very valuable Socialist work.' I have heard recently from readers in two islands off the *Scottish coast,* where the islanders were the first to feel the economic blows 'now being dealt out to all Scotland.' He describes what a fight it meant to bring 'confidence and direction and provide positive leadership — *L.M.* helps a lot with arguments to counter BBC propaganda, which is so important in isolated places.' From another *island reader:* 'It's the most convincing and consistent advocate for peace in this country and America.' A reader who sends all her copies to a friend in the *U.S.* quotes his comment: 'We have nothing at all like it here, either for the well-written English or the clarity of viewpoint. We look forward to it every month and I am the most popular man in town when it arrives.' From *Wales,* the editor of a socialist magazine writes that *L.M.* 'is one of the best magazines propagating socialism I know. I wish I could give more than this to the fund, but as a Minister of Religion I am one of the lowest paid members of this affluent community.' An old friend from *Kent* remarks that the

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increased price should *increase* circulation, 'by reminding readers that a gold-mine of Socialist nuggets is cheap at two bob.' A younger reader from *London,* brought up as a Tory, wonders what were the contents in the 'thirties of this 'good companion, guide, educator and friend.' It is always a pleasure to hear from the younger and newer readers, and none the less because of late we have had our losses.

There is *H.G.B.,* who figured in the fund list for many years. We shall not see the handwriting again of this talented, gay, spirited Socialist sailor, who gave us a picture he had himself painted of his first ship, in which he had sailed in the early 'nineties on an Arctic Exploration. We must also say farewell to a remarkable reader from Surrey, *George Fitt,* who started his political life over 60 years ago at 15, giving out leaflets for the Social Democratic Federation. I had hoped to quote this month a letter received from him describing how a new reader he had won was 'more than pleased and states what good reading *L.M.* is.' For despite delicate health, George Fitt was always looking for new converts as well as faithfully contributing his extra shilling a month to the fund. Below you will see, for March and April, his last contribution, which Mrs. Fitt yet found time to send when he was taken to hospital, because she knew he would wish it. Such steady, persistent, life-long fighters for socialism, whom long fighters for socialism, whom nothing can dismay, are the heart, sinews and backbone of the movement. They have built themselves into the foundations of our new world of socialism; they will long be remembered in that future life. We salute them, and all stalwart fighters for peace and socialism the world over this May Day.

ANGELA TUCKETT

O valiant Earth, O happy year
That mocks the threat of winter
near,
And hangs aloft from tree to tree
The banners of the Spring to be.

Remembering George Fitt and H. G. Blewett, our friends and comrades.

£89 12s. 0d.

REGULAR DONATIONS came from: 'Daisy Bell', £10; 'Windfall', £10; S. Turner (for Daisy Mendez, Cuba), 5s; B. W. Mackay, 6s; plus extra donation for price rise, 5s; G.I., 1s 3d; E. **Strachan Rogers, £3 13s; 'Backslider', £10; L. Bates, 5s; H. Brindle, 5s; Blackburn Branch, 2s;** Oldham Branch, 1s; H.H., £10; G.F., £10; 'S. Mill', £1; J. Tarver, 5s; R.F.B., £3; D. H. Strathern and Friends, 10s; 'Anon', Whitchurch, 4s; B. Ainley, 10s; S. Morrissy, £1; 'In Memory of Joe Brien', 3s; L. Perkins, 2s 6d; G. Fitt, 2s; 'Pax', 2s 6d; L'Humanite, 4s; D. Sandwell, 4s 6d; S. Townsend, 10s; M. Illing, £1; 'Oliver Twist and Friends', 15s; R. Dodd, £1; N. Usher, 2s 6d; F.G.A., 10s; J. A. Smith, 6s; R. McLeod, 5s; 'Butcher Family', 10s; J. A. Purton, 7s 6d; 'Socialist Sailor', £1; E.J.B., 10s; A.M.T. (for Fernando and Guilherme, Portugal), 1s.

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Notes of the Month

MAY DAY'S CALL TO ACTION

> **Our strong arm will rise and the chains of slavery will fall. The toilers of Russia will arise and terror will strike the hearts of the capitalists and of all other enemies of the working class.**
>
> (Lenin, May Day Manifesto of the League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class, 1896.)

THIS May Day of 1963 sees the level of the working class movement rising in all the countries of the Western capitalist world. The Mass Lobby for Jobs on March 26, with 7,000 converging on London from Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, the North East, Yorkshire, Lancashire and all industrial England, organised by five Federations of Trades Councils with the support of the Scottish Trades Union Congress and the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trades Unions, alongside a host of trades councils, trade union district committees and branches and joint shop stewards' committees, and with 10,000 marching in the procession leading up to the orderly marshalling at the doors of parliament, which the charges of police and mounted police vainly sought to disorganise, revealed a measure of response without previous precedent even in the thirties—and indicating significantly the difference and advance in the stage of the movement since the thirties. Elsewhere in this number we print contributions giving impressions and drawing lessons from this demonstration by participants.

May Day's Call for Unity

In France the historic five weeks general strike of the miners, with the support of the railwaymen and other sections (we print elsewhere a report from a French railwaymen's leader written at the conclusion of the strike) successfully defied the dictatorial requisition orders of de Gaulle, and compelled the concession of the wage increase over two stages which had previously been refused. What made possible this strength of the Mass Lobby and of the French miners' fiight? Unity, unity and again unity—the great message of May Day. Communists and non-Communists, Labour Party and non-party trade unionists, co-operated together in the organisation and marched together in the demonstration of the Mass Lobby. This made possible its unprecedented support, and points the way

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forward for the future. In France the great strike battles of the miners and other sections had the official leadership of all three trade union federations, Communist, Socialist and Catholic. Working class unity made it possible to defy the extraordinary powers of de Gaulle. This also points the way forward to that working class and democratic unity which can restore and renew democracy in France.

Against Beeching—Against Tory Ruin

In Britain also the lesson and need of unity is no less insistent. The battle of the railwaymen, which is also the battle of the whole labour movement and of the entire people, against the Beeching offensive of transport disruption and chaos (an offensive, not in the interests of transport rationalisation, but in the interests of the oil colonial monopolists and the car magnates to create greater chaos on the roads) is now coming to a head. In Britain also the same unity needs to be carried forward in the political field to hasten the fall of this corrupt and crumbling Tory Government, which is only sinking Britain deeper along the path of ruin, and to advance the fight for the alternative programme and policy which Britain's future requires.

Span of Thirty Years

Only thirty years ago Hitler was imposing his Nazi caricature of May Day in Berlin and Germany and ordering the German workers to march at his command. The reformist leaders of the German Trade Union Federation, hailing the Nazi 'revolution' as a 'continuation' of the 1918 revolution, and proclaiming that the common enemy was Communism, officially instructed the workers to participate in Hitler's May Day. 'The union leaders' (the Social Democratic leaders of the German Trade Union Federation), declared the then Labour *Daily Herald* on April 24, 1933, 'have sealed their reconciliation with the new rulers of Germany'. Nevertheless, this subserviency did not win for the Social Democratic trade union leadership the hoped for position of a recognised and tolerated adjunct to fascism. A large proportion of the workers in the big enterprises refused to obey their leaders' instructions and held off the Nazi May Day demonstration. As soon as it was thus clear that the hold of the reformist leadership on the workers was insufficient for the purposes of fascism, immediately on the next day, on May 2, the Nazis took over the trade unions, incorporating them into their

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Labour Front, and threw the leaders into prison, replacing them by Nazi officials. 'The Leiparts and the Grassmanns', declared Dr. Ley, the leader of the Nazi Labour Front, 'may profess their devotion to Hitler; but they are better in prison'. There is a lesson of unity here also for today, and for our modern 'Democratic Socialists' who (with this shift in the label to hide their past) carry on the tradition and methods of Social Democracy. The disrupters of working class unity do not only strike their victims, but in the end bare their own breasts to the enemy and suffer in their own skins. The lesson might still be recommended to the gentlemen of Transport House and Great Russell Street. Perhaps also Frank Cousins may find it useful to consider this experience of the German trade unions and recognise that the maintenance of the anti-communist ban in the great union which he leads is not in the interests of working class militancy and strength.

From May Day, 1933, to May Day, 1963

Between these two May Days, within the short span of thirty years, the world has decisively changed. And the great changes have been achieved precisely where working class unity, anti-fascist unity or anti-imperialist unity have been realised. Thirty years ago what was the picture of the world? Hitler's terror was tearing the living body of Germany and preparing its offensive to extend that terror over all Europe. Fascism ruled the countries of Eastern Europe up to the borders of the Soviet Union. Socialism embraced only one-twelfth of the world's population, though the strength and endurance and unbreakable unity of that socialist twelfth of the world, in alliance with the anti-fascist struggle of the peoples, was finally to save mankind from fascist destruction. Colonial slavery dominated all Southern and Eastern Asia, the Middle East, Africa, the majority of mankind. Lenin's picture of a world enslaved and paying tribute to a handful of financiers in the capitals of Western Europe and the United States was still true. All that is now changed. Socialism has extended from one-twelfth to one-third of the world's population. The chains of colonialism are being shattered (not yet completely, not yet the chains of colonialist economic subjection and tribute, though the formation of independent states has been widely won; the great revolutions in Southern Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America are still maturing) by the upsurge of the peoples. And now in the remaining imperialist minority sector of the world in the West, the once leading and

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temporarily retarded parasitic Western sector, still the hotbed of imperialist reaction and the arms race, today the working class and its allies among the middle sections of the population, under the blows of the contradictions of capitalism and the worsening economic situation, are stirring against their monopolist rulers.

Dilemmas of Western Capitalism

'The class struggle is obsolete.' The 'new capitalism' in the advanced Western countries has eliminated the old contradictions and mass unemployment. 'The legends of the dole queues of the thirties mean nothing to young workers today.' Such has been the music offered by the apostles of the 'new socialism' in the Western imperialist countries during the past decade and a half. The singers of these tunes are piping very low today and bashfully looking the other way. The Director of the International Monetary Fund, Per Jacobsson, speaking in New York on February 19, warned:

> The post-war expansion in the United States and Europe is over, and a new situation has arisen which shows certain similarities with what happened in the early nineteen-thirties.

President Kennedy in speech after speech has emphasised the menace of 'disaster' for the American economy unless his desperate emergency programme of wholesale tax cuts and a huge budget deficit were adopted:

> The spectre of 'disaster' for the American economy was conjured up today in Washington by President Kennedy in arguing for a cut in income tax and against a cut in the budget. (*Daily Telegraph*, March 14, 1963.)

> Yesterday in Chicago President Kennedy warned that the United States might face 'ten years of recession' and chronic economic troubles unless Congress passed his proposed tax cuts. (*Sunday Times*, March 24, 1963.)

In West Germany Chancellor Adenauer declared to the Bundesrat on February 6 that 'the economic miracle . . . has come to an end'. In Britain the March unemployment figure of three-quarters of a million (after the end of the special freeze-up circumstances of the preceding two months) was the highest March figure since the second world war had brought an end to the mass unemployment of the thirties, while surveys of industry showed two-thirds of factories with productive capacity under-used, the index of production heavily fallen, and the pound sterling having to be propped up in face of falling confidence.

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Economic and Political Battles

It is this worsening of conditions, and explosion of the legends of the supposed 'new' capitalist prosperity and solution of contradictions during the recent years of relative boom, which has found reflection in the marked rise of the tempo of the class struggle in all the countries of Western Europe. The significant feature of this development of the class struggle has been its political repercussions. Already last year the heroic struggle of the Asturias miners and the general actions all over Spain have reduced the Franco régime to an increasingly precarious situation and brought in view the prospect of its downfall. In France we have seen how the strikes of the miners and railwaymen and the solidarity actions of other sections, with the associated leadership of all three trade union bodies, has laid the basis for a further development of co-operation of Communists, Socialists and Catholic Republicans which, if carried forward, could replace the authoritarian rule of de Gaulle by a renovated democracy—not the paralysed sterility of the later years of the Fourth Republic, after American intervention through the Marshall Plan had destroyed its democratic electoral-parliamentary basis by excluding the largest party from government, but on a broad democratic basis of popular co-operation. In Britain the development of the mass struggle in the economic field has been closely associated with the demand for the resignation of the Tory Government and for new elections. The political bankruptcy of policy and universal discredit of the Macmillan Tory Government has now reached record proportions, unequalled since the days of the Neville Chamberlain Tory Government or the dying Balfour Tory Government before the electoral anti-Tory landslide of 1906.

Tory Government's Economic Somersaults

It is equally this worsening economic situation, combined with the rising resistance of the workers and discontent of the middle sections previously adhering to Toryism, which has given rise to the Macmillan Government's desperate succession of expedients and universally derided economic somersaults, most glaringly illustrated in Maudling's Budget. These somersaults are not merely the reflection of obvious electoral calculations—the aspect on which the Labour Front Bench has mainly concentrated its fire. They are also the reflection of the glaring contradictions and dilemmas of the boosted new 'managed' capitalism and 'mixed economy'—the aspect on which the Labour theorists have been less concerned to dwell.

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The record has been a record of successive reversals of the engines. Already in the summer of 1961, in face of the weak industrial and trading position and the adverse balance of payments, the Government, after a spendthrift budget of concessions to the rich surtax payers in the spring, hastily reversed the engines, and imposed drastic economy cuts with increased taxation and credit restriction and higher interest rates, and called for a 'wage pause'—that is, to oppose any increases of wages, irrespective of rising prices. This was declared to be essential in order to restrict home demand and thereby compel manufacturers to concentrate on increasing exports at the expense of the home market. As the outcome showed, the effect was to throttle production without increasing exports, which went down further.

Industrial Battles of 1962

From the outset this policy of the wage-freeze met with resistance from the workers. At the Portsmouth Trades Union Congress in September, 1961, the Chairman's Address of Ted Hill declared that 'there is little hope of any trade union responding to the Government's appeal'. In January, 1962, the London tube strike paralysed London traffic and brought business in the capital city to a standstill. In January and February the two 24-hour token general strikes of the engineers all over the country showed overwhelming enthusiasm and solidarity in response. Over 1962 the number of workers officially recorded as involved in strikes was 4,421,000—the highest figure since the general strike year of 1926 (although allowance must be made for duplication through the two 24-hour strikes). The number of working days lost through strikes was 5,794,000—the highest since 1957, and in contrast to an average of 3,940,000 during the eight years 1954-61. Nevertheless, the readiness of response of the workers, shown where the trade unions gave the call for action, was heavily limited by the paralysing role of the dominant right wing leadership in the unions. The Government's wage freeze was to this extent successful that during the second half of 1961 and the first half of 1962 the advance in weekly wage rates fell behind the advance in retail prices, and only barely caught up in the second half of 1962.

Government Tactics and the Trade Unions

Faced with the measure of resistance of the workers, the Government pursued two tactical methods. First, they replaced the 'wage pause' by an appeal for 'wage restraint', operative from March,

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1962, to apply a 'guiding light' of a maximum increase of 2½ per cent—now raised, since the Maudling Budget, to 3½ per cent. Second, they sought to draw in the trade union bureaucracy into co-operation by setting up the two bodies, the National Economic Development Council and the National Incomes Commission, and inviting General Council participation in these organs of co-operation with a Tory Government. The General Council accepted to join N.E.D.C. by a vote of 21 to 8, but rejected participation in N.I.C.—a characteristically contradictory pair of decisions, reflecting the ambiguity of the position of the reformist leadership trying to bridge both sides of the class struggle. But the rapid further worsening of the economic situation, the growth of mass unemployment, and the anger and resistance aroused by the Government's ruthless rationalisation offensive, through Beeching to close down railways, through Robens to close down pits, and through Boyle against Burnham and the teachers, tore holes in the policies of class co-operation, and compelled the Government to resort to new expedients, culminating in Maudling's Budget.

Reversing the Engines Again

By the summer of 1962 it had become clear to all that the effects of the Government's policy of economy restriction measures were proving disastrous. Restriction of the home market had not led to the expected increase in exports. Production was throttled. Steel output in 1962 was 7 per cent below the level of 1961, which had already been 16 per cent below the level of 1960; the present level is running at 70 per cent of capacity. The increase of production in 1962 was estimated at a record low level of under 1 per cent. Between the second quarter of 1962 and the fourth quarter of 1962 the index of industrial production fell by 1·9 per cent. In July, 1962, in a drastic Cabinet reorganisation Lloyd, the 'Economy' Chancellor was sacked, and in his place was put Maudling to reverse the engines. All the aims, it was now declared, must be set towards a policy of 'expansion'—of course on a basis of 'wage restraint'—with extension of credit, lower interest rates, reduction of taxation and cheerful contemplation of the prospect of budget deficits. This was parallel to the similar moves of Kennedy during the recent period, faced with the same intractable problem of stagnant production and mass unemployment continuing in the American economy, despite all his buoyant electoral and inaugural promises of a 'dynamic' 'forward' uplift.

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Maudling's Budget

This is the situation which has found expression in Maudling's Budget with its tax reductions of £269 million and a prospective net deficit of £687 million. Kennedy this year has budgetted for tax reductions of £2,143 million and a deficit of £4,249 million. Britain's scale is smaller; but in each case the principle of the magic holy health-giving deficit is the same; and in each case increased arms expenditure helps to make the deficit larger than the tax reductions. Last year's budget aimed at a surplus of £433 million on current account; this year's at a deficit of £90 million on current account. Last year's budget on the total account resulted in a net deficit of £66 million; this year's calculates to increase the net deficit by £621 million. This is the essence of the plan for 'expansion'—which is the opposite of a serious physical plan to take over and expand the productive resources and output of the nation. Indeed, the physical plans (Beeching) are largely the opposite. The prospects of inducing manufacturers by tax incentives to move northwards into the areas of high unemployment are a weak alternative to real planning, when simultaneously these areas, whose problems can only be tackled as a whole, are being denuded of the transport necessary for industrial development and local life and turned into derelict areas. What the left hand of the Government offers the right hand takes away.

A Gambler's Budget

But what happens to the pound sterling? Two years ago all the Government Ministers and all the wiseacres of the financial press and expert economic preachers to the populace were proclaiming that Britain would face ruin on the balance of payments and the collapse of the pound unless home demand were curbed, exports forced up and a large surplus achieved in the budget. Now they are all singing the opposite tune (except, of course, for the continued need of 'wage restraint'). No wonder the Labour Front Bench have been having a high old time in the budget debate quoting previous speeches of Ministers amid uproarious laughter. By all means let them enjoy their parliamentary game of battledore and shuttlecock and find exhilaration in scoring palpable hits. But the real economic situation deserves more serious attention. The Government is embarking on a gamble, the old familiar gamble of the financial shot in the arm to stimulate the patient instead of treating his sickness; and the consequences, especially if this is only the first stage, as

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widely anticipated, to a further electioneering budget next year, may produce new critical conditions and further deterioration of the economic situation in the end.

After Us the Deluge

Is there any present prospect of the revival of capitalist world trade to make possible the large increase of exports required simultaneously to cover the gigantic increase in Government overseas, mainly military, expenditure (from £147 million net in 1957 to £371 million in 1962) and to prevent the inflationary measures resulting in a new crisis in the balance of payments in the not distant future? On the contrary, the battle between the rival capitalist powers for export markets is sharpening. The attempt to increase exports, says Maudling, will be 'a formidable task'. 'I am not in a position to commit myself to an export target at present', says Board of Trade Minister Erroll. Already the pound has been propped up, as Maudling revealed in his budget speech, by heavy drawings on Continental banks and the International Monetary Fund. And if these credits should begin to become exhausted? By that time, if the storm breaks, the Tories evidently calculate, there will be a Labour Government to inherit the mess. Indeed, the Tory Ministers might seem to be engaged at present in creating the maximum chaos and breakdowns in every direction in readiness for a supposedly inevitable Labour Government to inherit: not only in the economic-financial situation; but in foreign policy; in nuclear strategy; in Central Africa; in Kenya; in the operation of the Beeching programme or the Greater London Act. The Labour Government would then have the job, as usual, to pick up the pieces, and, while continuing the basic imperialist cold war foreign policy, to patch up capitalism, impose the necessary controls and austerity, and thereby earn popular revulsion against these horrors of 'socialism'; after which the Tories, swinging back on this tide of revulsion, could gaily enter on a new spendthrift and racketeering orgy. Such would appear to be the present Tory calculation. The responsibility rests with the labour movement to defeat this calculation by being armed in time with a policy which really breaks with the past, breaks with the vicious cold war Nato foreign and nuclear policies, and opens a direct attack on the monopolies.

What is Labour's Alternative Policy?

This is the situation which renders so important already today the character of the answer to the question: What is Labour's alternative

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policy? What will be the policy of a Labour Government? The popular demand for new elections, for an end to the Tory Government, for a new Government and a new alternative policy, has reached unparallelled strength. The Gallup poll in March showed two-thirds of the electorate demanding a new election, while the proportion of Conservative supporters had fallen heavily to 33½ per cent, that of the Liberals had diminished slightly from the previous rapid expansion to 15½ per cent, but the support for Labour had risen to 50 per cent—a figure without parallel for the support of any party in these Gallup polls since their inception. It is true that the recent run of by-elections has shown a certain variation on this picture: the Tory vote has slumped even more heavily in these constituencies, reaching less than one-fifth of the vote, with lost deposits in two cases; but the Labour vote has shown a tendency also to drop slightly. This is in some degree a pointer to the central problem of the present political situation.

Crux of the Problem

The anger of all sections of the people against the Tory Government, the rise in the level and tempo of the class struggle, is preparing the conditions for the return of a Labour Government as the visible alternative. But there is not the same degree of popular confidence in the policy of the Labour Party as presenting the alternative for which the people are looking. That is why the fight for the defeat of Toryism cannot be separated from the fight for an effective alternative policy. The two sides cannot be separated. The significance of the fight of the Communist candidates, however limited in scale under present conditions, in some of the current by-elections, the municipal elections in May or the coming general election is precisely that it gives expression to these two sides of the fight and thereby strengthens the fight of the whole labour movement. It may be worth noting that in the two by-elections where the Tories lost their deposits Communist candidates were fighting and thereby raised the whole level of the anti-Tory campaign.

Is Bi-partisanship Ended?

The popular demand for an alternative policy is equivalent to the demand for an end to bi-partisanship. But the initial signs of recent parliamentary debates, also after the election of Harold Wilson as Leader, have not been too promising. In the first general debate on policy in the House of Commons on February 11, the general

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verdict of the press was to note the essential identity of policy behind the 'sound and fury' of the customary polemics:

> A surprising amount of common ground between the Government and the opposition could be discerned. (*Guardian*, February 12, 1963.)

> While roundly declaring the Government's whole policy in ruins and berating the Prime Minister for having no alternative plans ready, Mr. Wilson was unable to outline any very different plans himself. (*The Times*, February 12, 1963.)

> When the Opposition blueprint was analysed, it would be found that most of the proposals put forward had already been adopted by the Government. (Reginald Maudling in the debate.)

> Behind all the sound and fury, the justifiable accusations of incompetence and the calls for resignation, there was, as usual, a wide measure of agreement between the Front Benches about general policy objectives. (*The Times*, February 15, 1963.)

Or take the debate on the budget. The concentration of Labour's Front Bench spokesmen on exhuming endless quotations from the wise saws of Macmillan and Lloyd during the period of deflation no doubt produced the most witty parliamentary scoring points; and Government Ministers were reported as grinning with delighted amusement. Well they might grin: for the effect was to turn all the attack on the temporarily defunct Lloyd for the benefit of Maudling. The main criticism of Maudling became that he had come round to Labour's policy too slowly and too late.

> His criticism was certainly not that the Government had been expansionist this year in the budget, but that for three years they had held back expansion. . . . He was glad that the Chancellor had said that expanding production and a strong pound went together. . . . He welcomed the Chancellor's conversion to the proposals that the Opposition made a long time ago for linking aid to underdeveloped countries with the unemployment problem in Britain. (Harold Wilson in the House of Commons on April 3, *The Times* report.)

The net effect becomes a certificate of merit for Maudling.

From Gaitskell to Wilson

The transition from Gaitskell to Wilson as Leader of the Labour Party since February has brought certain new factors bearing on the perspective of a future Labour Government. The role of the Leader is neither to be exaggerated nor under-estimated. In the structure of the Labour Party the hierarchical tradition of leadership from above, inherited from bourgeois parliamentarism, by which the Leader or Prime Minister lays down policy for his followers, has been uneasily yoked with the democratic working class principle of

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the sovereignty of the elected conference of delegates. The always latent conflict was brought into the open by Gaitskell in repudiating Scarborough in 1960. The death of Gaitskell, as our contributor E. M. Winterton vividly described in our March issue, was treated with almost monarchical reverence by the B.B.C. and press, with a memorial service in Westminster Abbey, attended by the Government and Diplomatic Corps, and with the Archbishop of Canterbury officiating. All this has demonstrated the vital importance to the bourgeoisie of the position of Leader of the Labour Party as almost the centrepiece of the modern British Constitution. Hence the attention given by all political quarters to the choice of his successor.

Significance of Wilson's Election

Initially it was evident that official conservative quarters and their press favoured the extreme right wing candidate, George Brown. Wilson's capacity was recognised; but he had blotted his copybook in the past by one or two left adventures, as when he had resigned with Bevan in 1951, or stood against Gaitskell as Leader after Scarborough in 1960; and *The Times* feared that he might as Leader 'embitter party and class politics'. But as the election proceeded, it became clear that, with the existing currents to the left in the working class and popular opinion, Brown would antagonise wide sections of the labour movement; while Wilson, precisely because of his measure of popularity with the left, and greater skill, might prove more suitable in the coming difficult period to hold together the Labour Party and a prospective Labour Government and present the official policy in a more acceptable fashion. In the final election Wilson was elected Leader in February by 144 votes to 103 for Brown. Wilson's vote, exceeding his 1960 vote by 63, may be regarded as representing the combination of the left and the centre (these are very relative terms in the Parliamentary Labour Party) and perhaps some more calculating elements from the right. Brown's vote represented the hard core of the irreconcilable right wing.

Whose Leadership? Whose Policy?

The election of Wilson as Leader has been acclaimed by many on the left in the Labour Party as a victory for their viewpoint. This is certainly a picture far removed from the real balance of forces in the Parliamentary Labour Party and in official Labour policy. The real balance of forces in the parliamentary party was shown in their election of a Parliamentary Executive of confirmed right wingers, in

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complete contrast to the election of left wingers by the constituency party delegates at the Annual Conference from their representatives on the Party Executive. Wilson's Shadow Cabinet consists entirely of this entrenched Right Wing, with the addition only, in a minor position, of the ambiguous centrist Crossman. The Shadow Foreign Minister, Gordon-Walker, made his first parliamentary intervention on March 5 to declare that 'what deterred Russia from making an isolated attack on Britain was the fear that they would be exposed to an annihilating first-strike from America' and to criticise the Government for not supplying sufficient troops for Nato in Germany. The same demand was expressed by Reginald Paget in the Army estimates debate on March 19 when he stated that a Labour Government would increase Britain's Nato contribution to four divisions of 80,000 men, in place of the present 55,000.

New Currents

The fight on policy has to be fought in the broad labour movement. Only the innocent would imagine that Wilson as Leader could inaugurate a basic change in official policy, even if he wished to do so. Nor is there any reason to assume that that is his desire. Indeed, his first declaration after his election was to affirm that he would continue the policies of Gaitskell—that is, to give assurances to the right wing with whom the power at the top lies. On the other hand, there is no doubt that his election by a keenly contested vote against 103 for the extreme right wing candidate is a reflection of the present balance of forces in the labour movement, and also of the rising left currents in the working class and in the general political situation. New questions are arising, and will further arise, to which Wilson will not necessarily react in the same way that Gaitskell would have done. Wilson showed his skill and political flair in the first beginnings of his leadership by making some gestures which, without departing from official policy, could win some popularity with the left. He reaffirmed in his first intervention in Parliament that Clause IV, affirming the aim of the Labour Party to be the common ownership of the means of production, was the policy of the whole Labour Party. He promised repeal of the Rent Act. He emphasised the importance of de facto recognition of the German Democratic Republic, thereby arousing the anger of Brandt and Continental Social Democrats. He addressed a public rally of the Anti-Apartheid Movement in Trafalgar Square to call for the cessation of the supply of arms to South Africa. (Although

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since then he appears to have repudiated this by stating that a Labour government would continue to fulfil the Simonstown Agreement for the supply of naval armaments and planes to South Africa).

Danger Signals

On the other hand, the more dangerous negative signs have so far outweighed these positive expressions. He has been assiduous to reassure the right wing by reaffirming his support of Nato and the American alliance. In an interview on Bonn television be explained that he would only recognise the German Democratic Republic in the same sense that he would recognise 'an elephant in the zoo', but not establish diplomatic relations. He added that a Labour Government would seek to reopen negotiations for Britain's entry into the Common Market. While accepting an invitation to visit Moscow, as Gaitskell had been about to do at the moment of his illness, he made sure to arrange a prior visit to Kennedy in Washington. In his accounts so far given of his visit to Washington, he has emphasised the close understanding reached with Kennedy; his acceptance of United States monopoly and direction of Western nuclear strategy ('recognition of the United States as the custodian of the strategic deterrent', according to *The Times* report); his intention, not to renounce, but to place British nuclear weapons under American command; and his acceptance of the United States demand for an increased British contribution of 'conventional' forces for Nato. All this chimes in with the demands of United States policy for Britain. No wonder his reception in Washington was rapturous. At this moment even the normally subservient Tory Government is making some stand and entering into some degree of conflict with the United States over the supply of steel pipes to the Soviet Union, over the possible import of Soviet oil, and over the resistance to the demand for more troops for Nato. It would be unfortunate if the Labour Party or a prospective Labour Government should come to be regarded by the electorate as the 'Voice of America'.

United States Policy and Europe

There is no doubt that the White House and the State Department are taking into account the rising left currents in Western Europe and are making their calculations accordingly to find suitable partners for their cold war policy. On March 28 the Washington correspondent of *The Times* reported:

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It might seem strange that conservative America is hoping for socialist victories in Europe, and of course a great many Europeans would be apprehensive. Nevertheless, the White House long ago made it known that a Labour Government in Britain and a Social Democratic Government in West Germany would not be unwelcome.

The United States Administration generally wants of Western Europe a new political stability and the cohesion that an ideological identity could possibly bring. The idea seems to be that Mr. Wilson in Britain and Herr Brandt in Germany, along with their Italian, Scandinavian and other colleagues, might possibly act together as did the Catholic Christian Democrats in the immediate post-war years.

Behold the 'new line' of American support of 'socialism' to carry forward the cold war in the new era. To which might be added, as in accordance with the 'new line', the parallel support of 'Arab Socialism' to cover counter-revolutionary terror in the Middle East. Forewarned is fore-armed. Let the British labour movement be forewarned. We do not want to see such social reform plans as a fourth Labour Government may attempt (leaving out of account for the moment the discussion of the limitation of such plans as so far put forward) wrecked once again by Bevinism and Fulton.

May Day Calls to the Fight

Thus May Day calls to the fight in this coming critical year alike in the industrial and in the political field. It is essential to defeat the Tory Government's offensive on the working class. It is essential to unite on the broadest front in order to hasten the defeat of the Tory Government in the electoral arena, and to secure the return of a new Government for a new policy. And it is essential to fight at the same time with all the strength of every section of the labour movement for the real alternative policy which is required in order that such a policy shall become the policy of the new Government which is formed. Both sides of the fight are inseparable. The necessity of unity against Toryism must not be allowed to be used as a pretext to paralyse the parallel essential fight for the alternative policy which the situation requires. The combination of these two aspects of the fight is the condition of victory. These lines are written before the Communist Party Congress at Easter. But there is no doubt that this Communist Party Congress will make its contribution to this common aim.

April 8, 1963. R.P.D.

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Problems of Trade Unionism in the Sixties

DEFEND THE RAILWAYS

Arthur Leith

Chairman, Secretarial Council 2, Scottish Region, A.S.L.E. & F.

IT is twelve months since I reported the Lobby of Parliament by Scottish Railwaymen and Scottish Unions on March 8, 1962. At that time we were joined by many English Railwaymen and could muster around three hundred men. Since then many demonstrations have taken place by Railwaymen of all grades, representing, National Union of Railwaymen, Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen, and Confederation members. All-Britain demonstrations have made their presence felt before Parliament. And possibly for the first time Railwaymen of all unions played their part in the broad demonstration of March 26, for the right to work.

From these early seeds of action came the National Rail Strike of October 3, and the main unions becoming committed to National Industrial action. The N.U.R. and Confederated Unions have already stopped the Railways on the basis of the Workshop Plan on closures, and with the rising mood of all all-grades membership, can be expected to demonstrate in a wider form of Industrial action. The A.S.L.E.&F. leadership is also committed to industrial action, having agreed to the 1962 Annual Assembly of Delegates' decision on rail closures. It is ironical that this policy of 'industrial action' failed to get a majority at the N.U.R.'s Annual General Meeting in 1962, yet they used it on October 3, 1962. Whilst it got a majority at the Locomen's conference, it still has not been applied by A.S.L.E.&F. That apart, it now appears that the meeting of Railway Trade Union leaders on April 8, 1963, agreed that Joint Industrial action is now a real possibility. This creates a close bond of unity amongst the N.U.R. Locomen and Confederation Unions. No doubt the campaign within the unions of rank and file members has given a necessary impetus towards direct action, to those trade union leaders who need and deserve this push!

It is accepted that a National Rail stoppage in itself, will not stop the Plan. The need of the day is for the whole Labour movement to lead broad sections of the people to resist the Plan and create the conditions for an early General Election. Already, it appears, that Mr. Noble, Scottish Secretary of State, has reservations about

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the Plan as it affects Scotland. Even the Premier had qualifications. This is Tory double-talk calculated to deceive the people. There may even be slight concessions on some lines scheduled for closure, in an effort to give the Plan some form of respectability and decency. Let Railwaymen and the public 'gang warily'! It is now clear the Plan is a blueprint on Rail closures and not Rail Development. What are the differences between it and labour movement policy? First of all it is based on Profitability: When a line does not pay close it. The Beeching Plan accepts that profitability should be the first commandment. The second is obviously to transfer traffic to the roads if it does not meet the first.

The 'Modernisation and Re-equipment of British Railways' Plan of December, 1954, para 9, laid down:

> Indeed the question in the Commission's mind is the amount by which the total returns on the outlay will exceed the minimum figure of £85 millions a year, and this without the benefits accruing to the public direct, such as a better service, lower charges than would otherwise prevail, *and a major contribution to relief of road congestion.*

The 50,000 people who will die on our roads between now and 1970 when the Railways will 'almost' pay, had better make their voices heard now! The anticipated increase in private motoring and the transfer of traffic from rail under the Beeching Plan, will ensure, at least, that they will have the company of possibly another 50,000 valuable lives.

The plan itself not only envisages this transfer of traffic to the roads, but openly visualises that further closures may be necessary after experience. There is a suggestion that holiday and other 'peak' services are not justified because the cost of providing the coaches and power far outweighs the return involved. It goes on to suggest some form of seating control and a fares policy (that means an increase!). What if the bus operators also judged on this basis? After all, if they can only use their luxury coaches during the holiday and 'peak' periods, surely they can also argue that they do not get the same return as buses on regular services? Or what if Dr. Beeching examined the London Underground in the same way?

The next positive aspect of the Beeching Plan is the question of coal distribution. This part deals with hauling coal in train load quantities to depots of distribution. It is envisaged that this will be carried, by agreement of the Coal Board, in trains that can be loaded and emptied in a few moments by the use of hopper-fitted wagons. The Plan goes on: page 33, para 2, 'For the same reason, the changes

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will be beneficial to the coal trade as a whole, but may not be welcomed by all individual merchants, *especially some of the smaller ones*! Coming from the private monopoly of I.C.I., the Doctor will have in mind large private monopoly of coal distribution. The miners will be thinking of the nationalisation of coal distribution, to keep this in step with nationalisation of coal production and the evident need for a national fuel policy. The Railwaymen will be seeing the question in the light of a national transport policy.

Beeching's plan therefore unites the forces of long-distance, short-distance and commuter travellers whose only outlook is either no services or limitation of services and increased fares. It unites the private motorist due to the additional hazards he can expect by greater road congestion. It unites the many people and areas that will be denuded of rail services, leaving them open to the direct monopoly—with increased fares—of the road operators. It unites the road transport worker, who is also faced with greater speed-up and exploitation on roads that will become more and more congested. It can even unite the railway trade unions on a broad basis!

The immediate task of the railway unions is to ensure that the movement of protest is co-ordinated and finds expression in the Trades Councils; Labour Parties and other working-class bodies; that the fight should be broadened to include the many organisations and people who see the Plan as a danger to them, to their country and to an adequate transport system.

At some time, action by railwaymen themselves will be necessary. That is, a withdrawal of labour to demonstrate to the people that railwaymen are serious and really concerned at the destruction of their industry by a government with only the authority of lost deposits. The pressure from trade union branches must be maintained and the Labour Party and Trades Union Congress brought into the struggle to defend Britain's nationalised railway system. These main organisations have to urge the shelving of the Beeching Plan until an examination of all transport is made, and taking into account all aspects, economic and social. The Labour Party have to declare their position in regard to the form that nationalisation has taken and its weaknesses; where mistakes exist they have to be corrected. Above all, they have to lead the struggle against the murder of the railways, not by saying that industrial action will assist the Tories, but by supporting railwaymen in their unchosen struggle to defend their industry and the property of the British people.

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BATTLE FOR JOBS: THE FORWARD MARCH

Dick Beamish

Executive Member, South Wales Area, National Union of Mineworkers.

I HAVE always held the view that the marching feet of men can make history. In recent months men and women have marched in Wales, in Belfast, in Scotland, in the North East and the North West of England, as well as in London, in support of the mass Lobbies to Parliament to draw attention to the scandal of unemployment in the 'sixties. It was good to see young workers from both pits and railways heavily represented, and responding with determination and enthusiasm as their fathers had done. The method of the Mass Lobby had a great effect on Members of Parliament: it strengthened the determination of those who were already sympathetic, many of whom gave their fullest support; it served notice on reluctant Tory M.P.'s of what to expect in their constituencies.

Those who decry the Mass Lobby as 'serving no useful purpose which could not be achieved by other means' merely reveal how great was the impact upon themselves. Certainly each mass lobby, each demonstration, is an important factor in the vital campaign to bring an end to this decrepit Tory Government. What is now of greatest importance is the task of keeping both the agitation and the pressure going. Of course no one of any experience would argue that even a national lobby of all organised workers would be the only step needed. No national campaign could be successful which was not based upon continuous work in each locality. Since our own mass lobby from South Wales, which was a grand success, that is what we are concentrating upon. We have already held meetings of delegates from all our Miners' Lodges, other trade union branches, trades councils, Local Authorities, Labour Party and Communist Party. In this way, we weld real working-class unity of purpose against our common enemy —the Tory Government. For this purpose, mass demonstrations will take place at Swansea and Aberdare on May Day Saturday.

As always my own union, the Mineworkers, will be well to the fore. The South Wales miners are in the tide of the general mass struggle, on more than one front. We conducted a campaign of moral and financial support for our comrades the French miners, to whom the South Wales Area sent £5,000 at an early stage in their struggle. In addition, the Executive decided to be officially represented on the Aldermaston March.

History is always made when ordinary people are on the forward march.

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Unemployed in Birmingham

The registered unemployed for February in the industrial Midlands, and in particular in the Birmingham district, reached its highest figure since before the war. An alarming feature was the high number of school leavers unable to find employment. There is also a reservoir of unemployed not registered, so the official figures do not give a true picture.

I was unemployed myself for a short period last autumn; but as a skilled worker my chances were better than the semi-skilled or unskilled. An impression I got during this period was that a man of 50 years of age had little hope of employment unless he was skilled. The coloured workers here are finding difficulty in their search for employment and unfortunately some of the unskilled unemployed resent them. There is no doubt that the unemployed here need organising and perhaps the Lobby on March 26 could prove to be the impetus.

Birmingham is known as the city of a thousand and one trades; but we are also greatly dependent on Motors. In the motor industry here, there have been closures and short-time working. Whilst some projects are being developed outside the Midlands—Bathgate, in Scotland, for example—and the workers transferred to other departments, unless expansion plans materialise there will be serious under-employment here. mated; motors produced at cheaper rate with smaller labour force.

The immediate introduction of a 35 hour week is needed to combat automation and mergers. We are faced with two problems: the run-down of the economy and the threat of speed-up. Employers are no longer retaining surplus labour in the hope of improvement; and an indication of their enthusiasm is shown by their response to the appeal by the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce for funds to launch a campaign for 'National Productivity Year'. Another aspect is the compulsory retirement of workers at pensionable age.

What is true of Birmingham is also true of Coventry, Wolverhampton and the Black Country. These were the considerations which led Midlands trade unionists to decide to support the National Lobby, sending shop stewards from the great motor factories, and representatives from trade union branches and other organisations amongst the 'thousand and one trades'.

P. BANNISTER,
Birmingham.

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THE FIGHT FOR NEW TRADE POLICIES

John Eaton

ON March 11-15 a conference was held in London (under the chairmanship of R. W. Briginshaw, General Secretary, NATSOPA) of the 'Forward Britain Movement' which played a prominent part in the fight against the Common Market. Its object was to emphasise the necessity for continuing the fight against the 'Common Market attitude' towards trade; and the need for Britain, in collaboration with all countries and in particular the developing and the Socialist countries, to fashion its trade policies in a new mould. Representatives and observers were present from thirty countries, including India, Hungary, Ghana, Mali, Sweden, Norway and the Soviet Union. Mr. Arzumanyan, who heads the Institute of World Economy and International Relations of the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union, in the course of a detailed and penetrating contribution, argued that a 20 per cent annual increase in East-West trade was a practical realisable proposition. This argument was used by five* leading industrialists who wrote:

> The Russians have offered to negotiate the placing with British yards of four factory ships and six dredgers valued at £20m. They imply, as a condition, that we import some oil. So far this has been refused. . . . The Russians are now interested in placing more orders with the United Kingdom for plant for manufacturing synthetic fibres, fertilisers, chemical plant, paper-making machinery, etc., to a total of about £35m. They ask for eight years' credit, terms which can be obtained from western European firms. So far, it has not yet been possible for such credit to be arranged. . .
>
> (*The Times, February* 19.)

The writers sent on to say:

> We suggest that in the face of the current situation, and irrespective of any developments that may take place *vis-a-vis* western Europe, the Government should start negotiations with the Soviet Union, China and the other planned-economy countries, on a planned Five-Year Programme of two-way trade with a built-in increase of twenty per cent per annum.

Many speakers at the 'Forward Britain Movement' Conference referred to the needs and possibilities of increasing trade between the industrial powers and the developing countries and discussed forms of trade agreements and international trading organisations most likely to stimulate the growth of this trade. An international Committee for World Trade and Development has been established

*Robert W. Asquith, Chairman and Managing Director, Asquith Machine Tool Corporation Ltd.; Wilfred Brown, Chairman, The Glacier Metal Co. Ltd.; Dermot de Trafford, Managing Director, G.H.P. Group Ltd.; F. James Fielding, Deputy Chairman, Heenan Group Ltd.

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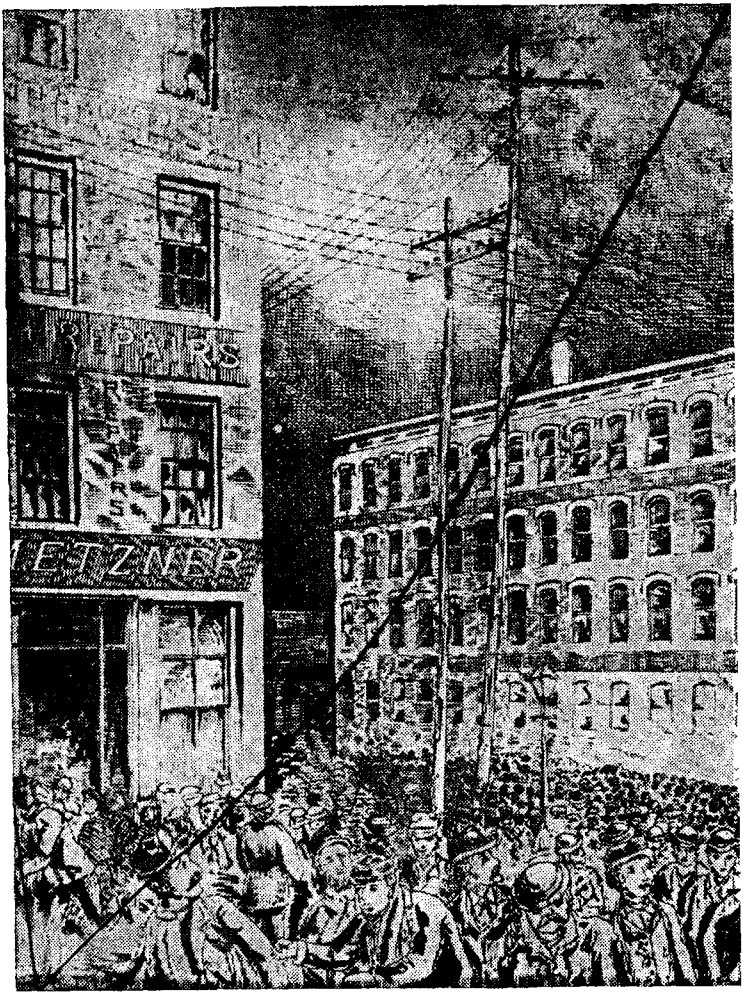

This forerunner of May Day, a demonstra
a provocater's bomb. Ten were charged: s

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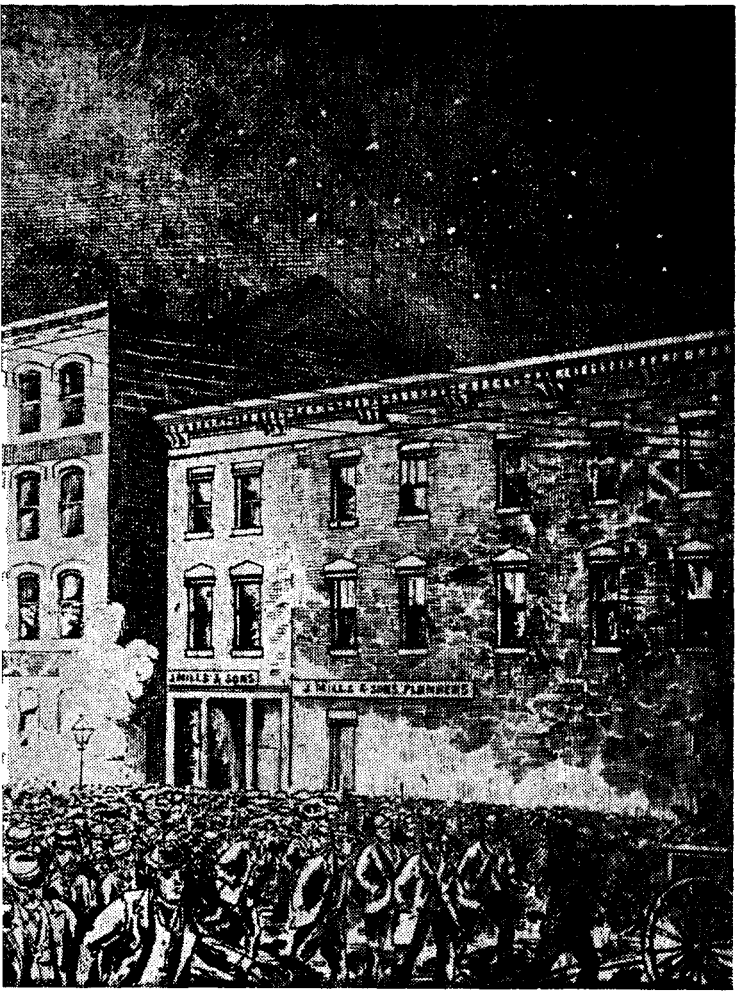
ONSTRATION



ıicago on May 4, 1886, was broken up by
d; four to death, two to life imprisonment.

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as a result of this conference and its Resolution No. 1 urges all Governments to take part in the Conference on World Trading and Development which the UNO General Assembly at its 17th Session resolved to call before the Spring of 1964. It also suggests that the agenda of this U.N. Conference should include 'The problem of trade between the industrial powers and the developing countries'; 'The whole matter of improving trade relations between the East and West'; and 'The seeking of ground for a new and comprehensive International Trade Organisation'.

These are objectives that the Labour movement should support and it cannot afford to delay its fight for a radical change in Britain's foreign economic policy which remains subordinated to the financial interests of the City of London and the most reactionary aims of the Cold War. Over steel pipes for Russia the British Government is at last daring to disobey 'orders from Washington'; but how much harm has been done by countless instances of less publicised obedience to Cold War restrictions on trade? Under the pretence of 'strategic considerations' trade of all sorts has been stopped. As Mr. Khrushchev pointed out, 'even trouser buttons could be said to be essential to a soldier's equipment'.

A long, difficult and stubborn fight is called for by the Labour movement, this implies struggle also within the Labour movement against the ideology of the Cold War and economic dominance over colonial or formerly subordinate territories. Deep changes in foreign economic policy are, moreover, vital to Britain's future. The modest rates of growth about which Neddy talks, are in practice nowhere near achievement. National output should now be 6 per cent above 1961, but in fact it is barely at the 1961 level. An expansion of exports, at least as rapidly as national output, is necessary but nothing is done to move towards the new trade relations with the world from which alone lasting expansion can come. The energies of the British Government have been spent chasing after its will-of-a-Common Market-wisp. The sum total of Tory philosophy on foreign economic relations up to the present has been 'keep the £ strong'—even at the price of stagnation at home —and, what is misleadingly called 'liberalisation', *i.e.*, no controls on capital or currency movements to the 'Western alliance'. The great alibi for this disastrous policy has been the Common Market. The President of the Board of Trade, at the end of last year, for example, when asked why the Government did not enter into the longer term agreements over imports that the Poles (*e.g.*, for

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pork), the Rumanians (the Board of Trade debars their beef), the East Germans and others require, blandly announced that he was waiting for the 'common commercial policy' of the E.E.C. to be worked out. Again the Government suggests that it would be against the national interest to be too dependent on Socialist sources. Such pseudo-strategic calculation is both dangerous and stupid, and ridiculous since there is no question of sole or major dependence on Socialist sources.

The government experts themselves have given the lie to the argument that we could not afford to stay outside the 'great European Market'. *The Times* (February 28, 1963) writes about the National Economic Development Council's report:

> One important variation in the report from the original model for 4 per cent growth set out last year by the office is the reduction of the target for annual growth in exports from 5·7 per cent to 5 per cent. This change has been made after the collapse of the Common Market negotiations. One reason that the adjustment has been possible is that agricultural imports will be less costly than was expected when Common Market membership was built in to the Council's forecasts. The effect of non-entry into the Common Market upon the aggregate output of seventeen of Britain's most important industries which were the subject of a special study, is stated to be 'negligible'. . . . The pattern may be different, but in most industries the effect on output is very small because trade with the Six is a relatively small part of output, because export opportunities will be more favourable in the Commonwealth and EFTA countries, and because any adverse effect on exports is usually expected to be accompanied by lower imports.

By not being in the Common Market we are less encumbered; but gimmicks, such as devaluation or export incentives will not add up to a trade policy. Whilst, in particular limited cases, export incentives may be of use, as a general expedient they are costly—they mean, after all, extra profits for exporters— and are not sufficiently discriminating. Devaluation (which would mean cuts in living standards at home) at best could do no more than give a short-lived boost to a limited number of commodities in a limited range of markets; it would do nothing to shape the new lasting pattern of trade that Britain needs. The time has come to recognise quite clearly that any attempt to plan for economic growth implies *pari passu* some planning and control of foreign trade. Clearly the advantage of a Socialist economy is that one can directly control the flow of goods required for export markets, as well as the flow of imports required to fulfil production programmes. Under such circumstances one need not live in fear of exchange crises sweeping away without warning the national reserves of foreign exchange. One cannot expect to enjoy such straightforward control within a

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capitalist economy such as Britain; but in order to meet even immediate essentials and to take just the first steps to prepare the way for lasting solutions and an advance towards socialism, active involvement by the State in foreign trade is essential.

The British monopoly capitalists trail behind the U.S.A. and Western Europe. Their first concern is to keep in being the alliance of capitalist powers, in order to preserve the system which permits them to be wealthy and powerful. But from the standpoint of the national interest, that is the interest of the people, their policy is an absurdity. All their efforts are directed to developing trade with about one-tenth of the world's population, within the borders of industrially developed capitalist countries—'taking in one another's washing machines', as one wit has put it. The tremendous potential market outside of E.E.C. and the U.S.A. is neglected. These are markets that a progressive State policy could open up. The economically developing countries want the capital goods our industries are equipped to produce; they want also credit to help them buy. But they want assured markets too for their exports, which include manufactured products from their developing industries as well as raw materials. We can produce some of these ourselves, but we should be ready to accept them for the broader advantage of mutually increasing prosperity. The State, by becoming an active partner to trade negotiations with these countries, can guarantee, and itself handle if necessary, purchases of goods. This actually gives it collateral covering the credits it may need to allow, so as to prime the first flow of trade. But when we have surplus capacity the national cost of giving some initial credit amounts to little. It is paid for by the unused resources brought into use. For, if prepared to participate actively and not to be diverted by the private interest lobbies, public authorities can place orders where there is idle capacity, and by so doing enlarge the national product and, therefore, the national wealth. Thus credit could be allowed to trade partners without home needs being deprived.

There are vast possibilities for expansion of trade with Africa, India, Asia generally, the Commonwealth generally, as well as with Latin America along such lines; but such developments need to be geared to a development of East-West trade. East-West trade is important for the Commonwealth, too, and initiative taken by Britain will help increase the flow of trade in many directions. Thus Britain, Socialist countries and Commonwealth would all benefit.

Despite bad official attitudes, trade between Eastern Europe and

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China on the one hand, and the Commonwealth on the other, has been growing as the following Table shows:

Exports from Commonwealth to Eastern Europe and China			*Imports into Commonwealth from Eastern Europe and China*		
		(figures in £ millions)			
	1957	*1961*		*1957*	*1961*
Total	219	441		280	377
of which:			of which:		
from U.K.	89	149	to U.K.	123	181
„ Canada	12	76	„ India	27	47
„ Australia	28	79	„ Hong Kong	71	64
„ India	19	40			

Obviously trade with the Socialist countries is not going to solve all our foreign economic problems. It has, however, a special significance which should not be overlooked. Ten years ago East-West trade accounted for about 2 per cent of Britain's foreign trade turnover; today it is in the neighbourhood of 4 per cent—a significant increase. The untapped potential in East-West trade is tremendous. This is true, too, of trade with great countries such as India, the peoples of Africa and South America. But trade with Socialist countries compels a new way of thinking, a new style, a deliberate plotting out of the future course of development, with State representatives as the negotiating party on the other side. However, there is something real enough to negotiate about. Last year gross industrial output in the Soviet Union rose by 9·5 per cent and realists in British industry are beginning to take note. Peter Trippe writing in the March issue of *Tooling* points out:

> Soviet steel production exceeded the combined production of the six Common Market countries put together . . . Soviet industrial production last year . . . was about 63 per cent of United States production, compared with 47 per cent in 1957. . . . In the past five years the per capita increment of industrial production amounted to 48 per cent in the U.S.S.R. by comparison with some 8 per cent in the United States. . . Approximately 800 major industrial enterprises have come into operation in the Soviet Union during 1962. . . The U.S.S.R. now trades with some 80 countries, has annual long term trade agreements with 60. . . Obviously, if we want to increase trade with the East-bloc countries, we must also be much more realistic than we have been in the past in establishing two way trade.

Finally, the efforts needed to develop this new style in trade, pilot the way to more trade with the economically developing countries of the whole world. Positive and active steps by a Labour Government with a new policy are needed to get things really moving.

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ENGLAND'S HUT TAX

The Rates Crisis Examined

TOM VERNON

(*President, National Association of Tenants and Residents*)

GROWING protests about the effects of the new rates assessments, and about the 1963/64 Demand Notes (or landlords' notice of increase on inclusive rents) based on the new figures, give a superb opportunity to progressive organisations to go deeper than Tory M.P.s and the national Press and to expose, once and for all, the injustice and cruelty of our ancient rating system.

As from April 1 last the system is working in complete fulfilment of its codes and principles; for the first time since 1929 all derating (save for agriculture) has gone and all valuations pretend to reflect current rental values. Hence, the system's seemingly grotesque unsuitability to the conditions of most ratepayers is exhibited fully for the first time to the majority of them throughout England and Wales. Not unexpectedly, they recoil in distate, to use a mild word.

It is the impact of the rating system, in its perfect form, which creates the present crisis. Proposals to institute instalment payments, to attack 'spendthrift' local authorities and to make some part of their services (education?) a charge upon only those who use them, are irrelevant. Pills to cure an earthquake.

Such ideas evade the real issue. They conceal the permanent determination of Tories, and the well-to-do and business interests, not to adopt a just system for financing local government and to preserve the present one somehow, giving minor 'concessions' and calling them reforms. The 'regressive' character of the rating system is denied by no one. That has been repeatedly acknowledged. The system, though quite discredited through impartial studies, is retained on the specious plea that it is well-established, it 'works' and is well understood; that any different system would have its difficulties, too, and would be unfamiliar.

The system is retained only because it is regressive. That is its great virtue in Tory eyes. What does the word 'regressive' mean? That the poorer you are, the bigger proportion of your income you have to pay. The richer you are, all the lesser. The system, in fact, has the same character as any tax on food or other essential commodities. *Labour Monthly* readers will recognise our rating system, therefore, as admirably appropriate to a class society. And it is on

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this recognition that we must base our attack and formulate our constructive proposals.

How does it come about that rates are regressive? Because each person's contribution to local rates (whether paid direct or as part of rent) is quite unconnected with his income and essential outgoings. It depends on a merely theoretical view of the rental value of his home reached by the rating valuer. Rates are, therefore, an Accommodation Tax. In Africa, the British called it a Hut Tax!

Because rent (and never more so than today) takes a larger share of a working man's wages than a well-to-do man's, a tax linked to rental values must necessarily have an equally regressive character.

By contrast, income tax is based on actual earnings, or unearned income if any, less allowances which take account of school-age children, certain dependents, mortgages and life insurance, age (65 upwards) and so on. In 1960/61, out of 23 million persons (or married couples) coming under tax review, over 5 million of them were completedly exempted from paying income tax; and this year's Budget considerably expands that number. All these exempted millions are held to lack enough capacity to pay income tax if they are to maintain a reasonable standard of living and rear and educate families. They are, accordingly, too poor, relatively, to contribute to the 53 per cent, of local government expenditure borne by the Exchequer. But towards the remaining 47 per cent, met from local rates they not only pay their whack, but more than a fair share as we have seen. What's left to be paid from rates comes from the more lightly burdened well-to-do and business.

On the parallel of the national tax system, local revenues should and can be raised by a local tax on incomes which would be based on actualities (and pay regard to poverty and family responsibilities). It would be a system based on facts and not upon the imaginings and hypotheses and questionable valuations of the rating valuers. The same assessment used for paying the national income tax—or being exempted—would be used for a local tax.

Is this an ingenious fantasy? Not at all. Denmark has had a local income tax since 1882—indeed, its national income tax system was a copy made ten years later! Norway, Sweden and Switzerland have successfully operated a local tax system for almost as long. Western Germany (for part of local revenues) and, too, a number of cities in U.S.A. have had the system for some years. A Departmental Committee set up by the Inland Revenue Department reported, prior to 1914, that a local income tax system would be

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workable in Great Britain, subject to a few provisos which could easily be met. All these uncomfortable facts, plus many more, are ignored by Tories—and, I must say, insufficiently considered by the Labour Party.

A new foundation for abolishing the present rating system arises from two main features of post-war experience. First, the constant fall in money's worth due to inflation, a chronic feature now in capitalist countries. Second, the increasing shortage of rented housing, the rocketing of rents and the ending of rent control and security of tenure.

It has always been recognised that rating is an unsound basis for local authority financing under conditions of inflation, because of the time lag in adjustment of money values (with higher expenditure on services such as education and housing) to the rating assessments. This is the main source of the so-called crisis in local government finance, not so much the expansion in expenditure. But the effect of inflation is catastrophic for ratepayers, and especially owner-occupiers who are, or have been, wage-earners; pensioners in their own homes are cruelly affected. Owner-occupiers' assessments are determined on a basis of assumed rental value, the evidence for this being the rents of nearby houses of similar kind where recent 'negotiations' have taken place. And taken place in a scarcity market, not a free market at all. The rates resulting from this fantastic exercise in what is mis-called 'valuation' impose such a disproportionate outlay from the lower incomes in many places as to make selling out seem necessary.

The second new feature (rents) exposes the fallacy, and absurdity, of the principle of hypothetical rents (developed self-interestedly by rating assessors in order to rise from humble clerkdom to a professional status) as the basis of value, instead of the former basis of actual rent. This obliges them to get their notions of value from rents established in 'negotiations' in a bogus 'free market' supposedly brought about by the notorious 1957 Rent Act, evidence which relates to only a small minority of the rented sector in the housing stock (itself now a minority group). Hence tenants of all kinds and owner-occupiers are deemed to be occupying houses beyond their means and expectations, but 'hypothetically' in possession of incomes matching their imagined grandeur! Council tenants are, of course, amongst those assessed for rates in this ridiculous and unjust way; subsidies are ignored, although they are granted to establish a level of rents appropriate to the known general average of such

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tenants' incomes. Incidentally, where the new rates are to some degree higher there should be attempts, not only to challenge the assessments, but to get a modification in a differential rents formula; the latter theoretically expresses what a man can afford for rent and rates without deprivation in living standards, so there's a good case.

In advancing the idea of having a local income tax in place of a tax on accommodation (rates) there need be no attempt to produce any proposals on detail points. Not only would the eventual Government drafters ignore our 'amateur' ideas, but it would be foolish to get involved in these. The simple demand must be made that each person's contribution to local government revenue must reflect his real capacity, as shown by his earnings less his inescapable obligations, and that we call upon Parliament to have a scheme embodying this principle placed upon the Statute Book at an early date, everything connected with the recent revaluations being totally suspended as a preliminary to scrapping for ever the discredited rating system of this country.

HOUSING THE HOMELESS

Katherine Hood

WHEN the Government made Sir Keith Joseph Minister of Housing last summer, great things were said to be under way. For this rich, ambitious, energetic man was already an expert on housing—was he not formerly a director of Bovis Ltd., one of our biggest building firms? Clearly this dynamic product of free enterprise was just the man to save us all. To be convincing this appointment should have come a little earlier. For every step that the Tories have taken in the housing sphere in the last seven years has been directed towards setting free the dynamic forces of private enterprise. The results make us look elsewhere for salvation.

The landlords were set free under the 1957 Rent Act to charge 'market value' for decontrolled houses. The land speculators were set free under the 1959 Town and Country Planning Act to charge 'market value' for building sites. The builders had been set free in the early 'fifties, but from the mid-fifties onward their path was made even easier by the curbing of local council building which was cut to half its former size in order to leave most of the field clear for the private developer. And although local councils were told to get on with slum clearance (the one thing which is not profitable

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to private enterprise) they were chased into the free money market to raise the cash. In short, for seven years we have been treated to a demonstration of the benefits of creative free enterprise.

Take the actual shortage of dwellings. We were told this shortage was over in the mid-fifties; the 1961 Census showed, however, that the number of families still substantially exceeded the number of houses. To meet this situation the combined effort of local authorities and private builders is producing no more than about 300,000 dwellings a year. Nearly three out of five are built for sale and not for letting which means that they do little to meet the most urgent needs of the badly housed or under-housed. But even if the bulk of this programme was switched to council building to let, its very size is quite insufficient to keep pace with the growing number of households, overcome the net shortage and simultaneously replace sub-standard housing. It is beginning to be realised that house building in this country is taking place at a much slower rate in proportion to the population than in most of the leading continental countries, let alone the socialist countries. In 1962 we in Britain produced rather less than six new dwellings for every thousand of the population. But in the Soviet Union they produced nearly twelve. So that if we had been building here at the same pace as they did there we would have produced last year, not 313,000 new dwellings, but over 600,000. Dynamic free enterprise is not so dynamic when it comes to building things that people need.

It has, however, shown itself excessively dynamic about building things that we do not want. Since office building has in recent years proved more profitable than flat building, valuable sites have been seized, valuable labour has been absorbed, and the development of new building techniques has been concentrated on a programme of office construction, that has now reached such monstrous proportions that even the Government has had to make a few feeble gestures of disapproval. By the time all the office buildings now planned for central London are completed, the total office floor space here will be 50 per cent bigger than it was before the war. This has already utterly distorted the pattern of employment, and caused appalling traffic congestion.

Since the landlords were set partially free under the Rent Act, we have seen a rapid growth in the number of homeless families, particularly in London where the net shortage is most acute. But the recently published London census reveals an equally rapid growth in something else. The number of empty houses has greatly

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increased. So that while 4,000 homeless people are herded into institutions, 25,000 houses or 'household spaces' stay empty. The same census shows that while overcrowding has scarcely changed at one end of the scale, under-occupation has vastly increased at the other. This is what happens when the private landlord system is freed from control; this process has been accompanied by a rent racket unparallelled in any previous period. Meanwhile three families in ten are without a fixed bath, nearly four in ten without a hot water tap, thousands of families are sharing and without exclusive use of stove or sink. Further north, where in places the actual housing shortage is not so acute, the housing situation is in some senses even worse. Here are vast slum belts where conditions beggar description. Dwellings *officially* classified as slums number nearly 600,000 and at the present rate of clearance many of them will be still standing in twenty years' time; in some towns they will be still standing in forty years' time. And these are only a fraction of the number of unfit houses not yet classified as such.

If you are going to tackle the housing situation you have to tackle the forces that created it. You cannot expect an ex-director of Bovis Ltd. to do that. But we have a right to expect that a future Labour Government might do something towards it. Unfortunately Labour's official programme, though it contains some excellent necessary emergency steps, falls far short of the fundamental measures needed if we are to transform the position in the longer run. The Labour Party stands for the repeal of the Rent Act—essential so far as it goes if we are to put a stop to the worst deprivations of private landlords: but Labour's programme adopted in 1957 for the virtual abolition of the private landlord system by the municipalisation of rented dwellings has long since been officially cast aside. Instead we have the new 'plan for old houses' under which it is intended to compel landlords to modernise those houses in need of improvement, and to purchase compulsorily only those houses which the landlord refused to improve. Whatever may be said in favour of this scheme, it clearly envisages the continuation of the private landlord system into the far future—this very system which has produced our present miseries.

The Labour Party proposes to provide loans at low rates of interest and reasonable subsidies to local authorities, so that the main housing drive will be switched to municipal building to rent rather than private building for sale. It also proposes to set up regional development corporations for the worst slum areas to

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supplement council building, and proposes to control the timing of private building, so that where there are shortages of labour or materials, resources can be concentrated on essential rather than unessential building. All this is good. But little is said about the *scale* of operations—we do not know whether Labour intends to step up housing output from its present average of 300,000 a year or not. Since it was in respect of numbers that the post-war Labour Government failed, this is rather a crucial question.

Finally the most fundamental obstacle of all is the private ownership of land. Recognising the appalling results of the present free market in land-soaring prices on the one hand, misuse of sites on the other, so that the planning of development in the interests of the people has become virtually impossible—the Labour Party proposes to set up a Land Commission which would purchase the freehold of all land about to be developed, and lease it back to the developer, whether public or private. While such a system would go some way toward eliminating the worst profiteering, and controlling development in the right direction, land would come into public ownership so gradually that the bulk of it would continue to be privately owned for decades to come. In other words this is essentially a compromise proposal greatly inferior to outright nationalisation of urban land which is what the situation demands.

The people have now seen what the Tories can do—it is very bad indeed. Time is short—but it is still possible for the movement to ensure that the next Labour Government takes office mandated to offer a real challenge to all the vested interests in the housing sphere.

The South Wales Area
of
NATIONAL UNION OF MINEWORKERS

South Wales Miners send warm fraternal greetings to workers the world over on the occasion of May Day 1963. We declare our solidarity with our Colonial brothers in their struggle to free themselves from the bondage of Imperialism. We call on the working class people of Britain to campaign for the removal of the Tory government whose policies are bringing economic ruin to this country and poverty to our people, and to fight for the return of a Labour government pledged to the introduction of Socialist measures to overcome our problems.

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ARAB PROBLEMS

C. Enisah

THE notions of Arab nationalism and Arab unity have recently found supporters in unexpected quarters. The leaders of the coups d'etat in Iraq and in Syria proclaim that they are staunch nationalists and they speak loudly of their devotion to the ideal of Arab unity, and these leaders find immediate support in the City of London and in Washington. The *Financial Times*, the organ of Britain's financial world, was among the first to welcome the Iraqi coup d'etat of February 8. Three weeks later, when all decent people were horrified by the massacres of left-wing opponents in the name of this professed nationalism, the *Financial Times* (March 1, 1963) was still of the view that 'all the same, the impression remains that both for Iraq and for the West it is the best possible government in Baghdad at the present time'. In the United States they were greeted with undisguised pleasure. The persecution of communists and left-wingers was seen as a most endearing attribute of the new rulers. And the *Washington Post* (March 14, 1963) drew the conclusion that 'there is a great deal in Arab nationalism that deserves American encouragement'.

Anyone remotely familiar with the modern history of the Arab world can indeed ask what kind of 'nationalism' and 'unity' it is that has thus become acceptable to imperialist States, who had spared no effort to dominate Arab countries and keep them divided.

At the end of the first world war, when the colonial powers swooped down on the Arab part of Western Asia after the collapse of the Turkish empire, division was the order of the day. Mandates, protectorates, autonomous sheikdoms, 'territories in special treaty relations', and so on, appeared on the new political map with every conceivable division carefully emphasised. For good measure, border lines even ran across ethnical groups, splitting, for example, the Kurds of Syria from the Kurds of Turkey and Iraq. In course of time, as the liberation struggle developed, the mandatory powers —Britain and France—were gradually evicted from one position after another. But not without a fight, not without creating and leaving behind them the utmost confusion. After their departure, stooge monarchies and feudal landlords were left in place, willing to maintain the old relationship in some other form, often with the backing of foreign troops in military bases. Or if the old relationship was no longer possible then a new one emerged with a new

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colonial power, eager to take over and even to elbow out the old. America began to step into Britain's shoes in the Middle East. The struggle of the Arab peoples to liberate themselves from the colonial past is part of a bitter class struggle to achieve human standards of life; a struggle where the issues are often confused by divergent trends within the forces aspiring to national independence. By its very nature, by its greed and its ruthless oppression, colonialism creates conditions where the toilers, the workers and the peasants, are not alone in their fight against it. Colonial rule, open or disguised, means that the standard of life of the working masses is reduced to the strictest minimum, that they are denied the right to organise and to develop their own political parties. It also means that the middle class, the local merchants, industrialists and small landowners, are unable to advance as a class. The Arab middle-class, frustrated economically, and politically, humiliated by the subservience of monarchs and the hangers-on to the foreign masters, placed itself at the head of the national liberation movement. Its position of leadership in the anti-imperialist struggle—in which for nearly half a century the toiling masses have carried the heaviest burden and suffered the greatest sacrifices—was due to the conditions resulting from imperialist rule itself.

So long as the colonial powers had the upper hand, the economy of the Arab countries remained desperately backward, based on the production of raw materials to feed the factories of the industrially advanced countries. Industry was not allowed to develop. Modern transport only existed where it suited the strategic or commercial aims of the foreign masters. Sources of electric power were left untapped. Education and technical knowledge were only provided to the selected few. From the social point of view, the result was that the industrial proletariat remained numerically small, and its efforts to build its organisations were hampered by tremendous difficulties. Trade unions only became legal in Egypt—with its comparatively higher degree of industrialisation—in 1942, in Iraq in 1944, and even then they rarely functioned without government intervention or open persecution. Peasants and agricultural workers —still the large mass of the population—have had an even harder struggle. In Egypt and in Iraq, the right to form peasants organisations was only achieved after the overthrow of the monarchy, and then curtailed or withdrawn again by republican régimes terrified of the potential strength of an organised peasantry. Despite these hardships, it was the heroic struggle of the masses that made it

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possible for the national bourgeoisie to defeat the stooge monarchies.

The Arab national bourgeoisie has very real conflicts against colonialism, old or new. It can never attain its own aims so long as the best sources of economic prosperity are controlled by foreigners: oil in Iraq, Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf; the Suez Canal and the cotton trade in Egypt (until a few years ago); industry, banking. insurance, etc., everywhere. But never for a moment does it lose sight of its own class interests or its fear of the workers and peasants whose fight for better economic and social conditions is sharpened by every success against the foreign exploiters. The Arab countries have had ten major upheavals in eleven years. Three monarchies have been destroyed, in Egypt in 1952, in Iraq in 1958, in Yemen in 1962. The whole region has been convulsed by rebellions, counter-rebellions, foreign intervention and civil wars. The reason for the prevalence of groups of military officers in almost every one of these changes is that the officers are broadly representative of the middle class. Through them and through their following in the armed forces, the middle class literally captured the weapons with which to enforce its authority both against its foreign oppressors and the popular forces. Another common feature of these rebellions is the contradiction between the proclaimed aims and the actions of the military rulers, seizing power in the name of anti-imperialism, seeking and using the support of the left-wing forces when clashes with imperialism are inevitable, and then turning against the left with the utmost ferocity. Imperialism can be appeased by a policy of anti-communism, but does it follow that it is prepared to abandon its real aims?

The colonial powers were initially attracted to the Middle East by its situation at the crossroad of three continents, its resources of raw materials, its markets for industrial goods. These attractions were later eclipsed by the discovery after the first world war of a far greater source of profit—the oil deposits. Two-thirds of the proved oil reserves in the world are in the Middle East. A handful of foreign monopolies derive from this oil a rate of profits unsurpassed in any other industry. A recent study of the oil operations in the Middle East* assessed the profits of the concessionary companies—largely American, but with a very important British share—at a rate of 66 per cent a year during 1955-60. Imperialism has had to cede important economic and political positions to the local bourgeoisie. But the oil companies, the power behind the scene at

*Study by the American firm of industrial consultants, Arthur D. Little, Inc., commissioned by the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting countries, and reported in the Italian weekly 'Il Punto' (January 5, 1963).

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the White House and in Whitehall, have kept their hold on the oil-fields. They are determined to put off the day when the oil riches must pass to the rightful owners, the peoples of the Middle East.

This has become the chief reason for the alarm at every step in the Arab liberation struggle, for the turns and twists of imperialist strategy, at times trying to hold back the whole process, at other times looking for possible allies in the ranks of the Arab middle class. This is why imperialist circles are helping to create new upheavals in the Arab countries, counter-revolutionary upheavals that would reverse the tide, at least for a time. Their new allies can only be the sections of the bourgeoisie who are ready to put aside the national interests in order to put down the militant democratic parties. The recent coups d'etat in Syria and Iraq are the work of military and civilian elements whose fraudulent use of nationalist slogans cannot hide that they are the flag-bearers of reaction.

The Syrian government of Khalid el Azm was overthrown at the moment when the national front of 1956 and 1957 was about to be revived. In Iraq, the coup d'etat took place as the Kassem government, after foolishly trying to compromise with the oil companies, was finally preparing to make a definite move. One of Kassem's last actions, barely a week before the coup, was to announce that he had decided to launch an all-Iraqi oil company to engage in oil production in competition with the foreign companies. The new Iraqi rulers have not yet dared to define their oil policy, but say they will take no action against foreign oil interests, and repudiate the authors of Kassem's oil policy. The whole personnel of the Oil Ministry, with only two exceptions, was thrown out immediately after the coup d'etat and many of its members are now imprisoned. A régime of terror, unprecedented even in the darkest days of Nuri el Said, has been installed against the progressive forces. The intensity of the persecution is a measure of the fear that when the masses lose faith in the bourgeois leadership of the national struggle, they will follow the parties of the left. Hence the empty promises and the confusing slogans of 'unity, freedom and socialism', to divert the people from the path of democracy.

There can be no freedom without democracy and no socialism so long as the progressive forces are persecuted. These are lessons that the Arab peoples have learned from bitter experience. As for unity, is a unity of undemocratic rulers of any use to the national interests? Is it even viable? In 1958, Syria and Egypt merged into the United Arab Republic; the merger lasted only three and a half

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years; it was ended by the Syrian people who were not prepared to tolerate a distortion of the ideal of unity into an oppressive rule imposed from Cairo. Arab unity is not a new notion conceived by Nasser or any of the military rulers in power in the Middle East. It has been an imperative need of the national liberation struggle from its inception half a century ago. The Arab peoples know full well that their disunity plays into the hands of their enemies. They are also fully aware that unity can only be the closing of the ranks, not to halt the struggle, but to carry it forward against their exploiters and first of all against the foreign monopolies still looting the national wealth that could ensure a decent life for the whole region.

THE STRIKES IN FRANCE

French Railwayman

WITH whom should one start if one is to talk of the struggle of the worst-paid workers in France—with the miners, the railway workers, the workers in gas and electricity, the Post Office workers, or the employees of the nationalised banks? For years, and particularly since 1958, the position has been growing worse and worse. Why has the miners' struggle developed on such a broad scale? Remember that at the time of the Liberation the Miners' Code made the underground worker one of the best paid, but today he gets on the average only Frs. 615 (about £46) a month; and in the last two years cases of accident and industrial disease have been doubled.

The miners' unions in the CGT, CFTC and FO,* record that wages are 11 per cent lower in the nationalised mines than in private industry. French miners have the longest working day in Europe, 44 hours a week. The fourth week of holidays with pay which the Government has been refusing them, is already enjoyed by thousands of French workers. The situation of the gas and electricity workers is the same; they too are claiming an 11 per cent

*The CGT (Confédération du Travail) is similar to our Trades Union Congress. The CFTC (Confédération Française des Travailleurs Chrêtiens) is the organisation of the Catholic trade unions. The FO (Force Ouvrière) is the minority organisation set up at the time of the Marshall Plan under Socialist guidance.

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increase in wages and various other benefits. In 1957, the Minister of Industry admitted that railwaymen's wages were 20·1 per cent below private industry. Since then, incessant struggles have reduced the margin to 11 per cent; 160,000 railwaymen are earning less than Frs. 600 (about £45) a month, in a period where their work is being changed by intensive modernisation, calling for higher skills on their part.

By a policy of preferential tariffs, which they propose to extend over all the Common Market countries, the trusts and monopolies help themselves to large additional profits at the cost of smaller users by the manipulation of the coal, electricity and railways of France. By transforming the 'public' services into their own private concerns with the help of the State, the monopolies add to the profit taken from the direct exploitation of their workers, the fruits of a policy of looting the working class in town and country. The following report, taken from an employers' publication *La Vie Française* of March 22, 1963, under the title of 'Capital multiplied a hundredfold', will give an idea of this prodigious profit-taking:

> We can be highly optimistic as we watch the rising graph of French securities since 1938. The scale of the rise is astonishing. Stocks and shares have certainly been the best investments in the post-war period. A capital of Frs. 100 in 1938 would amount at the end of 1962 to Frs. 9,450.

And the bomb explosion in the Sahara has shown the working class that there are large assets put to bad use.

The position of the Government is shown very clearly by the following analysis in the employers' weekly *Usine Nouvelle*:

> A month ago, seeing the workers' demands coming, the Prime Minister decided that a firm stop should be put to the flood of claims, in order to safeguard the great economic and financial equilibriums that were to some extent threatened. He and his collaborators thought that, if they could hold back the most crucial sector, that of the miners, they would be able to resist the whole flood . . . after the failure of the attempt to 'conscript' the miners, and the disappointment caused by the strike not disintegrating, the Government was forced to change its tactics. . . . In this second phase . . . the government tried to 'isolate' the miners' claims, to present them as a particular case and to meet them to a relatively large extent. . . . Once they could appease the miners, they planned to turn on the other nationalised industries and to offer them very limited and 'definitive' increases.

This shows very clearly the importance both of the miners' strike and of solidarity in the trade union field.

The failure of the 'conscription' attempt was a mighty defeat for

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the Government, but the great wave of active solidarity throughout the country was an equally great one. The coal and iron miners and the potash miners, wearing their helmets, went all over town and country to take collections, and workers and democrats subscribed in their hundreds of thousands in response to the appeals of the Socialist and Communist Parties, the CGT, the CFTC, the FO, the National Educational Federation, and the Union of French students; they were giving a meaning to the remark of the Catholic Archbishop of Arras: 'This strike concerns all of us'. Acting plainly in solidarity, 750,000 Paris engineers won at this same period their fourth week of paid holidays.

The Congress of French mayors, meeting in Paris at the beginning of the strike, passed unanimously (including the votes of mayors of the Union Nationale Republicaine (de Gaulle's Party)) a motion of solidarity with the strikers. The popularity of the movement is so great that the French Institute of Public Opinion (which nobody would suspect of anti-Government bias) records that 79 per cent of the French people think that the miners' claims are justified.

The government, defeated in its 'conscription' attempt, turned to the tactic of proposing 'an independent and wise third party as judge'; and a Commission of three members, all wholly devoted to the ruling financial circles, was set up. These 'wise men' were to say 'whether the claims of the nationalised sector were justified or not, and to what extent'. It was a real farce; the railwaymen were told in the Commission's report that their wages were in reality 'higher than those in the private sector', but that by juggling with the figures one could discover that they were 4·7 per cent to 5·2 per cent less (from September, 1957, to January, 1963). The railwaymen left them in no doubt when they appeared before the 'Committee of Wise Men', the importance of which, 'for improving the atmosphere among the railwaymen', had been emphasised by the government radio and the Press. They had just finished, on March 14, a 48 hours' strike, carried out very swiftly in a remarkable spirit of initiative and responsibility; this strike was decided on in common by all the trade union organisations in defiance of the obligation to give five days' advance notice of all national stoppages, under pain of penalty. The railwaymen at once asked the 'wise men': 'Are you empowered to discuss the claims of the railwaymen and to take decisions?' The presiding commissioner, Masse, answered 'No', and the attempt to fool the workers thus collapsed at the start.

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If the miners have held out for more than a month, one must not forget that, even before they had the active financial and moral support of broad sections of the population, the women from the miners' rows were already playing an extremely important role. What is one to say of some of these women and girls, making speeches for the first time in their lives at pit-head meetings, of others supporting their husbands on the picket lines, and of yet others going to offices and houses to call on elected representatives of the various political bodies, from Mayor to Member of Parliament, to Counsellor General and Senator? Nor must we forget the delegation of the miners' wives from Lorraine, who went to Paris to see de Gaulle himself, to tell him of their problems, and were turned away from the doors of the Elysee Palace by—a door-keeper! Who can fail to admire these women, who often have to face the problems of the family budget alone, when they answer the question, after four weeks of strike: 'How much money have you left?' with 'Twenty Francs'; and the further question: 'How will you make out?' with: 'We'll get through, the children, my husband and I. There are always potatoes. The vital thing is to hold out'.

On the railways, the two-hour strikes cause the maximum disturbance without the loss of a whole day's pay. Two-hour strikes, well staggered, create havoc in a railway centre. They often necessitate extra efforts from the railwaymen, as a result of the collapse of planned working; and the repercussions may last several days. The railway administration certainly 'prefers', if one can talk of preference in this context, a 'good' 24-hour strike to a two-hour call from the unions.

A new form of solidarity in sympathy with the miners was shown in the united appeal of the railwaymen of Somain (Douai) concerning the carriage of imported foreign coal. This appeal called on all railwaymen for a collective stoppage of work in the event of any train carrying coal of foreign origin being found in or passing through their centre. This new form of struggle apparently led the State Railway administration to take measures against certain drivers likely to take the initiative and also to divert certain trains on to less 'dangerous' lines.

Like it or not, the present struggle, covering a whole group of economic questions, is the first great social battle of the Fifth Republic. The unity forged in the trade union struggle and the unity born of solidarity, consolidates the unity achieved in other

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fields, in particular that of the Socialists and Communists since the legislative elections.

On April 3, the miners' strike ended. Two days before the employers' paper *Usine Nouvelle* had written: 'If the miners' battle had in fact been prolonged, there would have been a rapidly increasing proportion of the national working population which would have found itself very shortly unemployed'. Then the employers' real worry becomes apparent as it continued: 'there is no doubt as well that financial repercussions would have made themselves felt'. The article continued by dealing with 'the reasonable compromise . . . in a negative sense the capitulation of one of the parties would mean either the fall of the régime with all the upheavals that means . . . or the crushing of the trade unions resulting in the régime becoming more and more authoritarian'.

To sum up, the compromise on the 35th day of the strike was settled by a retreat on the part of the Government, for the miners' wages, taking into account the increase of 2·25 per cent from January 1, 1963, will be increased by 13·25 per cent on January 1, 1964. Four weeks' holiday have been guaranteed, and the questions of hours of work and supplementary holidays for length of service are going to be the subject of discussions. Another result will be the examination in the future of the mining industry, in the framework of the problems of all the power-producing industries and in the presence of the trade union federations of all workers underground. The miners' strike has given moreover, considerable and effective support to the demands of the other French workers.

We are far from the time when de Gaulle made his personal edict from Colombe les deux Eglises, that he was taking the step of 'conscripting' the miners. We have gone a long way since the government manoeuvres against the workers' struggle. The miners' 'block' has remained indivisible, just as other workers have. But the workers are not fools and they realise fully that their exploiters will try to take back with the one hand, what they were forced to give with the other. The monopolists have retreated but the battle continues. It is continuing particularly through demonstrations of unity in the collecting of food and money for the care of miners' children.

The struggle proved that the strength of the working class rests in its unity—a new lesson of capital importance. The de Gaulle government, which refused to summon the National Assembly, will prove in the end to have suffered permanently from this test of strength.

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LABOUR MONTHLY FORTY YEARS AGO

Socialist-Communist Co-operation against Fascism in Saxony

The Social Democratic Buck-Lipinski Government in Saxony was forced to resign on January 30. The immediate cause of the fall of the Cabinet was the failure of the Home Secretary, Lipinski, to grapple with growing Fascist forces. . . . On March 21 a new Cabinet was formed, with Dr. Zeigner as Premier. This decision was reached after long deliberations, the more reactionary Social Democrats favoured a coalition with the bourgeois parties; but the Social Democratic Congress in Saxony decided against any such coalition by a three-fourths majority and in favour of approaching the Communist Party. The Communist Party promised support on certain conditions, which were accepted by a delegate conference on March 20; the result is that the new Government is composed of left-wing Socialist elements.

The acceptance by the Social Democrats of the Communist conditions is the first actual step in forming a united front, and it is generally expected will lay the foundation of a real Workers' Government in the province of Saxony.

(From 'The World of Labour', *Labour Monthly*, May, 1923.)

BOOKS

Problems of Contemporary History

R. Palme Dutt

Lawrence & Wishart. 130 pp. 7s. 6d.

SEVERAL generations of Marxists have received a great part of their political education from R. Palme Dutt. He is, as every reader of Notes of the Month knows, one of the most distinguished living practitioners of contemporary history, and both the subject of his latest book and the occasion which produced it —the award of an honorary doctorate by the University of Moscow—are therefore very well chosen. The four papers on 'History and Truth', 'The Cold War', the 'Delay of the Socialist Revolution in the West', and 'Marxism and Socialism in Britain', which make up this volume, were originally given as lectures in Moscow.

Contemporary history has, as R. Palme Dutt points out, a number of special difficulties. It is written on the basis of incomplete and often misleading information, for even several years after the event many official documents are still kept secret, or only made available to selected generals and politicians. Also, 'the political controversies of the period may still be smouldering while the historian is at work, and may inevitably affect judgement in the consequent treatment'. These difficulties, as the author notes, affect both Marxists and non-Marxists. Nevertheless, the history of the present can be written scientifically, that is to say in such a way that its analyses and forecasts stand the test of time. Marx himself has proved this, for some of his most brilliant works were written in the rush of day-by-day political commentary and not in the quiet of the research library, e.g. the *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* or the *Civil War in France*.

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Conversely it is easy to demonstrate the blindness and muddle of those who face the world without the guidance of a scientific theory. The author very effectively recalls the confusion, the wild errors and miscalculations, of bourgeois politicians and scholars when faced with the events of the past fifty years: Lord Milner predicting (a few weeks before the 1917 revolution) that the Russian soldier would never rebel; *The Times* believing that there would be no second world war; the late J. L. Garvin arguing on the eve of the 1929 slump, that slumps had become too mild to disturb the world economy.

R.P.D. points out that this superiority of Marxism is not due to a lack of commitment, but to the fact that it is part of an advancing historical movement. It does not need to be afraid of the conclusions of scientific enquiry, because these show that socialism is a rising, capitalism a declining force. This is why the 'period of partial interruption of the full range of fruitful Marxist-Leninist studies in the field of contemporary history' to which he draws attention, is so much to be regretted. Its effect has been to 'discredit the theory in place of demonstrating its strength'. On the other hand many bourgeois historians shy away from science, or even deny its possibility, because they are afraid of the conclusions to which it may lead. No doubt few of them nowadays still claim to be superior to Marxism because they are unbiased searchers for truth. If any do, R.P.D. does well to remind them that in 1914 the bulk of Oxford historians, as historians claimed that Britain was right, while the bulk of German professors, if possible even more academic and scholarly, published a manifesto arguing that history showed the rightness of Germany. The point is, that the commitment of anti-Marxist historians inhibits and does not assist their writing of contemporary history.

This the author illustrates by the example of the Cold War. The official Western theory, supported by much scholarship, was about as wrong as any theory can be. No serious scholar now maintains that the Cold War was due to the determination of the U.S.S.R. to 'communise' the world by means of armed aggression and local revolutionary action, and that only the firmness of the West with its nuclear weapons prevented this. On the contrary, R.P.D. shows that U.S. and British governing circles were planning to push back Soviet power even before 1945 and in doing so took over Nazi arguments (such as the very phrase 'iron curtain'); and that the Western military theory of massive bombing was based on methods first developed to suppress colonial risings through the use of the technical superiority of industrial over backward nations.

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Whatever its weaknesses in that period, it is useful to remind ourselves that Marxist analysis of the Cold War has stood the test of time better than anti-Marxist propaganda.

The last two chapters are slighter. The discussion of the socialist revolution is particularly valuable, however, because it shows that Marx himself did not (as vulgar criticism alleges) expect the victory of socialism to occur first in Western Europe, but sketched out a forecast which led naturally towards the Leninist analysis. The last chapter also, and rightly, goes back to Marx himself, stressing the importance of the liberation of formerly colonial peoples for the emancipation of Britain.

R.P.D. has written a most useful and instructive book. One may in conclusion welcome the fact that he has not kept himself in the background entirely. He has included a short account of his career at Oxford, his expulsion on the eve of the October revolution, and the subsequent political discrimination against him. This is in itself a small, but by no means unilluminating, contribution to the history of our own times.

E. J. HOBSBAWM.

Africa in World Politics

Vernon McKay

Harper & Row. 468 pp. 52s.

A MORE CORRECT title for this book would be 'U.S. Plans for Africa'. True, it is concerned with the world impact of Africa's struggle for liberation. Precisely for this reason U.S. imperialism is striving desperately to extend its political and ideological influence in Africa. Rear Admiral Charles Bergen, in his evidence to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs (1958) made the position clear: 'The size, population, untold wealth of natural resources, and geographical position flanking both the Nato and the oilfields and communications of the Near East make Africa of vital strategic importance'. No wonder the United States has 43 'information offices in 31 African countries, with 133 U.S. political directors and 476 "local employees" '. The number of Foreign Service 'and other' U.S. officers in Africa rose from 664 in October 1957 to 1,359 in July 1961—more than half of them serving under the Mutual Security Act.

There is now virtually an army of U.S. 'observers' in Africa, ranging from missionaries to businessmen, from 'research' workers to military experts. Since May 1962, Washington has had its 'Bureau of African Affairs' with a staff of 163, financed by the Government, the Ford Foundation, and the Rockefeller Trust. This book reveals that the U.S. Government has not the slightest concern for the interests of the African peoples. Even its so-called economic aid is designed to serve U.S. interests. The author stresses that 'foreign aid is not an economic but a political operation', and the whole theme of the book is that Africa should serve the interests of the United States.

IDRIS COX.

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